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FISCAL YEAR 2001

MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

For the Period October 1, 2000 to September 31, 2001

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NEBRASKA NATIONAL FOREST

AND ASSOCIATED UNITS

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*Bob Sprentall, Planning Staff Officer, Nebraska National Forest

Approval and Certification

I certify that the Nebraska National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as currently amended, is adequate to guide management of the Nebraska National Forest and associated units for the coming year. There was a question as to whether The Nebraska National Forest was meeting the Recreation Goal on page 10 of this report and page III-3 of the 1984 Land & Resource Management Plan to "Maintain or increase land base of the Forest". The monitoring report indicates land exchanges over the last 15 years had resulted in a net loss of National Forest System Lands in apparent violation of this goal. On the other hand I believe the land exchange program has benefited recreation by reducing the patchwork of land ownership, providing increased access and acquiring land that has greater wildlife and riparian and therefore greater recreation value than the land that was exchanged. One could say the recreation land base has increased. In any case, the "Maintain or increase land base of the Forest" goal is not found in the Final Revised Land & Resource Management Plan now out for review.

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Don Bright

FOREST SUPERVISOR

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This report documents annual activities of the Nebraska National Forest. The Nebraska National Forest includes:

- Charles E. Bessey Tree Nursery;
- Buffalo Gap National Grassland;
- Fort Pierre National Grassland;
- Nebraska National Forest;
- Oglala National Grassland; and the
- Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest.

Each member of the public is a shareholder in the National Forests and National Grasslands. The USDA Forest Service, in consultation with shareholders, and as directed by Federal laws, regulations, and agency policy, manage the land and resources of the National Forest System under the guidelines described in Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP). These Management Plans, also known as Forest Plans, are agreements between the public and the Forest Service arrived at through lengthy and deliberate collaboration. Management Plans are designed to guide management of specific National Forest and Grasslands for a period of 10-15 years. In 2001, the Nebraska National Forest in conjunction with the National Grasslands located in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, issued a final environmental impact statement (EIS) and revised LRMP for public comment. Over 26,000 cards and letters were received. The Record of Decision finalizing the revised LRMP is projected to be signed in 2002.

The annual monitoring report assists the Forest Service staff and the public by displaying information as it relates to the stated goals in the 1984 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Nebraska National Forest, as amended. Forest Service managers prepare and review Management Attainment Reports semi-annually to show whether planned work is or is not being completed. Constraints to work being completed include final funding to the forest, project work plans, and responses to National, Regional, and local issues that need immediate attention, including fire fighting. To fully implement all projects listed in the LRMP for the Nebraska National Forest, the forest would need to be annually funded at a level in excess of $11 million dollars. In 2000, the final budget allocation to the Nebraska National Forest was $6,166,725 or 56 percent of the Management Plan budget.

This report documents Land & Resource Management Plan implementation progress in three ways:

Implementation Monitoring determines if plans, prescriptions, projects, and activities are being accomplished in compliance with Management Plan objectives, standards, and guidelines.

Effectiveness Monitoring determines if plans, prescriptions, projects, and activities are producing identifiable results in moving toward a desired condition.

Validation Monitoring determines if the assumptions, data, and models used to develop the Management Plan are correct, or if there are better ways, given new information and technology, to address resource management challenges.

Goal Implementation Progress

This section discusses the progress made in meeting LRMP goals. All components of the Management Plan, including the objectives, standards, guidelines, and monitoring section were developed to move conditions toward desired goals stated in the Management Plan.

Vegetation

Manage vegetation in an economically efficient manner to provide and maintain a healthy, vigorous environment capable of producing a range of multiple-use outputs and conditions; i.e., outdoor recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, livestock grazing, visual quality, water, wood fiber, research, cultural opportunities, and economic benefits to society.

National Grasslands

Manage the Buffalo Gap, Fort Pierre, and Oglala National Grasslands to demonstrate, in accordance with the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, to the local community and other interested publics sound land use practices for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat protection and improvement, soil conservation and watershed protection, resource protection during mineral operations, recreation development, and other grassland agriculture practices.

Recreation

Maintain or increase land base of the Forest.

During the period between 1986 and the end of FY2001 there were a total of 67 lands transactions (exchanges, donations, and purchases) with a net loss of National Forest System lands of 1337.61 acres.

Nebraska National Forest Lands Transactions from 1986 to 2001

Number of Transactions	Federal Acres Exchanged (Acres)	Non-Federal Acres Acquired (Acres)	Difference Between Columns 2 and 3 (Acres)
67	77169.06	75831.45	-1337.61

Identify and protect significant historical and archeological sites.

The Nebraska National Forest contains over 700 historic properties, ranging from historic

homestead depression sites from the 1900's to Paleoindian sites over 8,000 years old. In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended, prior to any undertaking the Forest takes into account any possible effects to historic properties. This entails analyzing the effects to existing sites and conducting cultural resource inventories in areas where the extent of historic cultural resources is unknown. Cultural resource inventories have been conducted on Nebraska National Forest lands since the late 1970's and many thousands of areas have been inventoried in this ongoing process.

accordance with Section 110 of the NHPA a basic management strategy is formulated for resource. For the majority of sites on the Forest this means periodic monitoring of the site is undertaken to make sure natural and man-made actions are not having an adverse effect. Those sites at risk to adverse effects steps are taken to ensure the integrity of the site is maintained, for example roads are rerouted, fence Newly discovered historic cultural resources are analyzed for content and condition. In lines are altered, and so on. Native American tribal consultation is sought when traditional cultural properties are encountered and for the formulation of management strategies.

Improve usability of the Forest resources by handicapped individuals.

No progress to report in 2001.

Wilderness

Those lands identified in the 1979 RARE II process as roadless and undeveloped areas will be managed to maintain suitability as wilderness until re-evaluated for the next planned revision of the Forest Plan, or until evaluated in an EIS if a project is proposed within them before the next planned revision.

The integrity of three RARE II inventoried roadless areas (Indian Creek 24,670 acres; Cheyenne River 7,570 acres; and Red Shirt 9,697 acres) on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland has been maintained. Wilderness-eligibility determinations were conducted as part of the Management Plan revision process. The Forest Plan Revision preferred alternative recommends 38,710 acres for Wilderness (FEIS was released in May 2001, the Record of Decision is expected to be signed in 2002).

The Pending Nebraska National Forest Units Land & Resource Management Plan Recommends the following areas as Wilderness:

Area Name	Acres
Red Shirt RARE II	8,450
Red Shirt Inventoried Roadless Area	5,300
Indian Creek Inventoried Roadless Area	23,890
Indian Creek Public Proposed Roadless Area	1,070

Total	38,710

The designation of the two RARE II areas in Nebraska (Soldier Creek Wilderness, 8,090 acres of roadless area and Pine Ridge National Recreation Area, 6,560 acres of roadless area) was accomplished through the Nebraska Wilderness Act of 1985.

Wildlife and Fish

Cooperate with the States, other federal agencies and permittees in managing riparian areas, hardwood draws, and shrub patches to sustain or enhance the biological, physical, and aesthetic values.

Management guidelines have been implemented on most riparian areas with potential for woody vegetation. Livestock grazing is excluded during summer months to protect young trees and shrubs.

Cooperate with State and other federal agencies in managing wildlife and fish habitat to provide viable populations; especially the indicator species.

In 2001, management indicator species monitoring examined the effects on indicator species habitat condition and suitability. The management indicator species on the Nebraska National Forest and associated units are:

- plains sharp-tailed grouse,
- pronghorn,
- wild turkey,
- mule deer, and
- black-footed ferret.

Black-tailed prairie dog will be an indicator in the revised Land & Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The current status of black-tailed prairie dog colonies on the Nebraska units are categorized by fully active, partially active, and inactive. The fully active colonies are those that have never been poisoned or have not been poisoned in the last several years. Inactive and partially active colonies are usually the result of recent poisoning. Prairie dog colonies are being monitored on each of the National Forest and Grassland units using various methods including aerial inventories and ground surveys using global positioning system technology.

Monitoring indicates that untreated prairie dog colonies and distribution goals are being met on the Oglala National Grassland.

Untreated prairie dog colony acreages and distribution are approaching specified levels on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland.

No poisoning has occurred during the last four years on the Wall Ranger District and since 1996 in Conata Basin. In addition, prairie dog shooting has been restricted on the Conata Basin area to protect black-footed ferrets and insure quality prairie dog habitat for ferrets since 1994. Year-round prairie dog shooting restriction was implemented in Conata Basin in 1998 and continued in 2001. In 2001, the South Dakota Game & Fish Commission implemented a hunting season on

prairie dogs, June 15-February 28, throughout the state on public land and closed in Conata Basin. Forest and Game & Fish personnel monitor this closure throughout the year, through signing and public contact.

No poisoning was done on the Fall River District in 1999 - 2001. All prairie dog colonies located within the proposed black-footed ferret reintroduction site on the Fall River Ranger District were surveyed, burrow densities were measured and all burrowing owls sited were recorded Burrowing owls were surveyed on ½ of the Wall Ranger District.

The Bessey Ranger District has 10 active colonies, with current colony acreage of 65. The Wall District has over 200 active colonies and less than 25 inactive colonies, with current colony acreage of approximately 15,000. Conata Basin area is a prairie dog focus area and currently has over 135 active prairie dog colonies, with current colony acreage of about 12,500. Fall River District has 65 –75 active colonies covering 3,750 acres. There are 38 active colonies on the Fort Pierre National Grassland with current colony acreage of 625. All prairie dog colonies on National Forest system lands within the Oglala National Grassland were surveyed. The Oglala National Grassland has 2 active colonies, 7 partially active colonies, and current colony acreage of 750.

High residual cover levels and structurally diverse grasslands characterize quality habitat for sharp-tailed grouse and many other wildlife species. Monitoring of current residual cover levels and grassland structural diversity is ongoing across most units on the Nebraska National Forest. Long-term data sets are being collected so that meaningful habitat suitability analyses can be completed in the future for sharp-tailed grouse (management indicator species) and other grassland species. The Wall Ranger District is managing over 90,000 acres for enhanced structural diversity and residual cover levels through planned grazing systems and modified stocking rates, season of use and pasture sizes. The Fall River Ranger District has selected 44 pastures for a total of 60,800 acres to be managed for high residual cover and structural diversity. The Pine Ridge Ranger District is managing 28 pastures (18,534 acres) on the Oglala National Grassland for higher residual cover levels.

In 2001, the Wall District surveyed over 30,000 acres for sharp-tailed grouse leks and identified 19 new grouse leks on the District. The Pine Ridge Ranger District surveyed 20,820 acres on the Oglala National Grassland and 2,670 acres on the Pine Ridge for sharp-tailed grouse displaying areas.

Through cooperative efforts and partnerships between the Pine Ridge Ranger District and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, management strategies continue to be developed and implemented for elk, pronghorn, and bighorn sheep on the Pine Ridge Ranger District.

The Fall River Ranger District surveyed 1180 acres in 2001 for raptor nests (Ferruginous Hawk). Using 6 breeding bird survey routes, each route 25 miles in length, and 26-bird point counts 40,750 acres were surveyed for 20 bird species. Surveys for 2 amphibian species and 2 reptile species were conducted using 18 visual encounter surveys, 83 miles of road cruises, and 7 sites were surveyed using snake traps.

The Pine Ridge Ranger District conducted breeding bird surveys using 2 survey routes (25 miles each) encompassing approximately 12,500 acres.

Provide warm and cold water fishing opportunities consistent with public demand.

Manipulating livestock season and intensity of use enhances the aquatic/wetland habitat on most large impoundments on the National Grasslands. Through cooperative efforts with South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Fisheries and Wildlife Assistance, the Forest Service has established special fishing guidelines on several small impoundments on the Fort Pierre National Grassland to improve the quality of these fisheries. The Pine Ridge Ranger District implemented a trout spawning bed improvement project on Bordeaux Creek. Six streambed sections, approximately 20-30 feet in length, were modified to improve the spawning habitat for trout by adding gravel to the streambed. Fall River Ranger District surveyed 10 ponds for amphibians and has completed 56 miles of calling surveys, listening for and identifying amphibians by sound.

Provide special emphasis for protecting and improving the habitat of threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

Mid-winter bald eagle surveys were conducted along 513 miles of roads 20 miles of waterways and 24,960 acres of swift fox surveys were completed on the Fall River District.

The Wall Ranger District is currently implementing a 1994 Environmental Impact Statement decision made in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service to reintroduce black-footed ferrets into the prairie dog colonies in Conata Basin on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and Badlands National Park. In 2001, 97 free-ranging black-footed ferrets with 64 litters (182 wild born kits) were detected on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. Forty ferrets were pre-conditioned in pens constructed on the National Grassland for release on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. The reintroduction of black-footed ferrets has been very successful on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. The most current survey indicates that there are approximately 220 ferrets located on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and approximately 15 located within the Badlands National Park boundary.

A Blowout Penstemon aerial survey was conducted and in 2000, 980 Blowout Penstemon were reintroduced in suitable blowout Penstemon habitat on the Bessey District. Of these approximately 200 plants remain with about 25% producing flowering and fruiting stalks in the 2001 season. Also in May, 2001 two additional sites were planted with a total of 1200 seedlings. As of this fall, about 700 seedlings have survived in these sites. Additional plantings are expected in 2002 depending on availability of seedlings.

Range

Design grazing management systems to ensure that livestock grazing is coordinated with other resource uses, agencies, and landownerships.

No progress to report in 2001.

Improve range condition to fair or better with upward trend on all allotments.

The Forest has conducted rangeland analysis using the Natural Resources Conservation Service methodology. This analysis demonstrates rangeland condition, trend, and soil health. The

rangeland within the National Forest portion of the Pine Ridge Ranger District has 13% rated in excellent range condition, 56% in Good, 30% in Fair and 1% in Poor condition. The Oglala National Grassland portion of the District has 13% in excellent condition, 54% in Good, 29% in Fair, and 1% in Poor condition. Our rangelands conditions meet Management Direction.

Enforce regulations of existing permits, insure compliance with approved Allotment Management Plans, resolve all unauthorized use in an expedient manner, and regulate proper use through timely utilization studies. In short, administer the grazing program on National Forest and National Grasslands in a positive manner, in tune with resource capability and permittee cooperation. Overcome traditional permittee non-cooperation with aggressive action and enforcement.

During 2001 Fall River and Pine Ridge Ranger Districts inspected 56 and 58 allotments, respectively, for Forest Plan compliance. In 2001, the Wall District monitored 69 allotments for their compliance with Management Plan standards and guidelines. In December 2000, a Decision Notice was signed implementing the Bessey Division Range Allotment Management Plan. This plan covers the entire Bessey Division Range Allotments totaling about 90,000 acres. This plan was implemented in the 2001-grazing season.

Timber

Operate Bessey Nursery within physical capacity to meet planting stock demands of State and Federal agencies.

No progress to report in 2001.

Promote and demonstrate opportunities for additional tree and shrub plantings.

No progress to report in 2001.

Promote and demonstrate methods of long-term management for existing and newly established woody vegetation.

Since the Management Plan was signed, in 1984, 4.01 million board feet of timber was harvested, 1,484 acres of timberland were thinned, and 460 acres were planted. No commercial timber sales were sold in 2001, but precommercial thinning to reduce natural wildfire fuel loading in 2001 protected 80 acres.

Water

Maintain or improve quality of the Forest's water yields.

No progress to report in 2001.

Insure water availability for managing the Forest.

No progress to report in 2001.

Minerals

Provide for exploration, development, and extraction of National Forest System lands mineral resources while minimizing adverse environmental effects.

The Nebraska National Forest currently administers 73 oil and gas leases and 4 producing wells. The 73 leases encompass approximately 68,127 acres of federal minerals on National Forest System lands within the Buffalo Gap National Grassland boundaries. Another 20 leases encompass approximately 32,191 acres of federal minerals on private lands within the Buffalo Gap National Grassland boundaries.

No new wells were drilled during FY 2001. There were 16 previously drilled sites that were inspected for compliance with production and/or rehabilitation standards. Four previously drilled sites were inspected for compliance with rehabilitation standards and are reclaimed. One well was never drilled and the Application for Permit to Drill has expired.

The Forest had 5 geologic management areas. They are the Shark Tooth and Ammonite Locality, Fiddle Creek Area, Marietta South 4, and the Wallace Ranch Locality, all on the Fall River Ranger District. Toadstool Park is on the Pine Ridge Ranger District. 2 geologic resources reports were completed on the Fall River Ranger District (Edoff Land Exchange and Red Shirt Canyon).

Human and Community Development

Use human resource programs to provide employment and training while meeting natural resource management objectives.

The Nebraska National Forest units use several human resource programs. These programs benefit the Nebraska National Forest and associated units and the people involved. The trend over the past six years shows increases in the use of the programs and the value of the work accomplished. These programs consist of the Volunteer Program, the HOST Program (work-study students, interns, job training program, etc.), the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and Youth Conservation Corps Program. The value of work provided by Volunteers, YCC and Hosted programs was $199,748 in 2001. These participants contributed 16,830 hours of work, which is equivalent to 9.35 person years.

Use human resource programs to work with other agencies and institutions to enhance rural development.

No progress to report in 2001.

Provide for local community stability when allocating resource uses.

No progress to report in 2001.

Increase use of volunteers.

No progress to report in 2001.

Provide a safe environment for Forest Service employees and users.

Forest wide and individual unit safety plans are developed annually. Safety meetings are held on a regular basis. The Nebraska National Forest and associated units also have a very active wellness program that encourages safety and healthy life-styles.

Protection

Minimize damage from flood, wind, and wildfire.

To help reduce the size and intensity of possible wildfires in the Strong Canyon drainage the Pine Ridge Ranger District completed the 200-acre Strong Canyon prescribed burn during spring of 2001.

Provide air and water quality compatible with State and Federal Quality laws.

No progress to report in 2001.

Provide integrated pest management program to prevent and control unacceptable insect, disease, plant and animal infestations and/or damage.

No progress to report in 2001.

Lands

Develop an active land adjustment program on the Forest.

Since 1985, approximately 77,169.06 acres have been conveyed into non-Federal ownership and 75,831.45 acres of non-Federal land have been acquired in land exchange, purchase, or donation. In 2001, the Forest conveyed 1000 acres of National Forest System lands and acquired 1080.00 acres of non-Federal land in two (2) separate land exchange cases and purchased one (1) 40-acre parcel of non-Federal land on the Oglala National Grassland. The transactions occur on a value for value basis not an acre-for-acre basis, and on a willing-buyer willing-seller basis.

The completed land exchanges, land purchases, and donations have provided the following benefits to the United States:

- 36 Rights-of-Way were acquired for the public to access National Forest System lands,
- 147 non-Federal in holdings were acquired,
- 2017 boundary corners no longer need to be located, marked, or maintained, and
- 834 miles of landline no longer need to be surveyed, monumented, posted, or maintained.
- 89 grazing pastures, including those under private grazing permits and term grazing permits, have been eliminated.

Planned mineral withdrawals identified in the Management Plan were not accomplished; however, Congress previously withdrew two areas. The Pine Ridge National Recreation Area

was withdrawn from mineral entry in the Nebraska Wilderness Action of 1985. The Soldier Creek Wilderness was designated for management in accordance with the provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

In 2001, 25 miles of monumenting, posting and landline location marking was accomplished along the Cheyenne River on the Fall River District and along the entire southern administrative boundary of the Bessey Ranger District.

Assure users of the Forest land resources are authorized.

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The Nebraska National Forest processed 12 special use permits and administered 203-recreation and non-recreation base Special Use permits in 2001.

The Forest staff continued to update and monitor both non-Recreation and Recreation Special Use Permits and Rights-of-Way Easements granted to those landowners needing access to their property across National Forest system lands. The Special Uses Data System (SUDS) is being maintained as the Forest Record System. As information is gathered from the Districts and permit holders, the records are modified appropriately. The Forest continues to implement the Special Uses streamlining regulation published in 36 CFR Part 251 – Final Rule. This assists the Forest Staff in providing excellent customer service and quality permit administration.

Manage inventoried RARE II areas to protect natural wildland character until status determined by legislation.

Roadless area status from the Northern Great Plains Plan FEIS Appencix C is displayed in the table following:

Roadless Area Status

Planning Unit/ Roadless Area	Original RARE II Acres	Acres When Forest Plan Signed	1998 Inventory Acreage
NEBRASKA NATIONAL FOREST UNITS			
Buffalo Gap National Grassland			
Indian Creek	24,670	24,670	25,100
Red Shirt	15,720	15,720	9,210
Cheyenne River	7,050	7,050	7,570
Pine Ridge District			
Soldier Creek Wilderness	8,090	8,090	7,800
Pine Ridge National Recreation Area	6,390	6,560	6,560
TOTAL	**61,920**	**62,090**	**56,240**

On the Buffalo Gap National Grassland Indian Creek and Cheyenne River RARE II areas have been maintained with the inventoried roadless area acreage exceeding the RARE II acerage. A reallignment of State Highway 40 through the town of Redshirt bisected the Red Shirt RARE II area. Consequently the Red Shirt RARE II area show a decrease in acreage. The NGP plan preferred alternative recommends for Wilderness designation 8,450 acres of Red Shirt RARE II

area and an additional 5,300 acres of adjacent inventoried roadless acres for a total of 13,750 acres.

The designation of the two RARE II areas in Nebraska (Soldier Creek Wilderness, 8,090 acres of roadless area and Pine Ridge National Recreation Area, 6,560 acres of roadless area) was accomplished through the Nebraska Wilderness Act of 1985.

Soils

Conserve soil resources to prevent permanently degrading land productivity.

No progress to report in 2001.

Facilities

Provide adequate transportation system to meet the demands of the Forest Service system user and to administer the resources.

The forest maintains the roads in the best interest available to the user and with available funding. Road condition surveys are implemented to prioritize the work in a safety and health procedure. This process also includes consideration of the surrounding environment and resources. Transportation signing is being improved at existing cattleguards and existing bridge crossings. Road drainages are improved as needed to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation to nearby water shed areas. We are making attempts to provide adequate transportation system to meet the demands of the Forest Service system user and to administer the resources.

Provide safe, adequate and economical facilities for Forest Service administrative personnel and Forest Service uses.

The forest has completed 100 percent of it's building condition inventories and entered the data into the INFRA data program. The information is used to prioritize the program of work on the forest. Projects are selected for safety and health, preservation of existing investment, and adherance to building codes. The forest will provide a safe and healthy working environment for the employees and visting public. Presently, a new potable water system is being installed on the Bessey Ranger District. Designs are being prepared for Fall River Ranger District work center and French Creek Campground water systems. Water system information or direction has been forwarded to the districts to monitor their water systems.

Energy Efficiency

Provide for energy efficiency in managing the Forest.

The forest Provides fuel efficient heating systems whenever existing systems are replaced. Windows, lights, and insulation are installed to improve heating and fuel efficiency when funding is available. Programable themostats are also included to improve frequency of heating

cycles. Windows, doors, and perimeter buildings are generally caulked prior to painting to reduce heat loss.

Cooperation/Coordination

Cooperate with Private, State and Federal resource agencies in managing and administering resource demonstration projects and technology transfer.

In 2001, partners, under agreements contributed $407,718 in cash and/or in-kind contributions or approximately 6% of the total forest budget for projects and services provided to the public and natural resource projects. There were 24 new agreements, 11 grants and 41 agreement modifications and/or annual operating plans completed in 2001.

The Nebraska National Forest Rural Community Assistance program provided six grants, totaling $19,500 to rural communities in Nebraska and four grants totaling $15,500 to rural communities in South Dakota during FY 01.

Included were two grants, totaling $7500 that were awarded to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Four grants, totaling $10,000 were awarded to rural volunteer fire departments and mutual aid associations to purchase or upgrade personal protective fire equipment.

Two grants totaling $7500 were awarded to the Nebraska Community Foundation to provide rural Nebraska Sandhills communities with leadership and entrepreneurial training.

Black Hills RC&D used a $5000 RCA grant to produce a video regarding rural wastewater systems and their design. The project was produced to assist those preparing to buy or build in rural settings to understand the implications of wastewater systems.

Different types of instruments include:

- Collection
- Challenge Cost Share
- Financial Assistance Grants (Rural Community Assistance)
- Interagency
- Intra-Agency
- Fire
- Law Enforcement
- Roads
- Memorandum of Understanding,
- Participating, and
- Modifications and/or Annual Operating Plans to existing agreements.

The Partners and the Nebraska National Forest contributed $744,356 in cash and/or in-kind contributions toward the above-mentioned agreements.

The staff of the Nebraska National Forest works cooperatively with local rural fire departments, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for fire suppression with the

use of cooperative volunteer fire agreements, state cooperative fire agreements and being a member of local mutual aid organizations. The Forest negotiated new cooperative volunteer fire agreements with 21 local rural fire departments. The Forest also provided financial assistance grants to four local rural fire departments/districts and/or fire/mutual aid associations for personal protective equipment. In addition, fire suppression within the Rocky Mountain Region and throughout the nation is provided on an as requested basis and as resources are available.

The Nebraska National Forest and associated units have existing agreements with 74 different partners such as the South Dakota School of Mines, Keep Chadron Beautiful, P.R.I.D.E., East Pennington Conservation District, Colorado State University, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, National Wild Turkey Federation, Tuma Endangered Species Foundation, Black-footed Ferret Recovery Foundation, South Dakota Game & Parks Commission, Chadron State College, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Pioneer Grazing Association, five counties for local law enforcement, and several federal agencies.

. The Wall Ranger District and its neighbor, Badlands National Park, participate in numerous field seminars with a variety of colleges studying natural resource management including wildlife biology, range management, geology, and botany. In addition, several field tours are sponsored annually to demonstrate sound land management to various interested groups and organizations.

Restrict regulatory activity to the minimum necessary to achieve resource management objectives and standards.

No progress to report in 2001.

Support natural resource management goals of private parties and Federal and State agencies where compatible with the mission of the Forest Service.

No progress to report in 2001.

Research

Increase awareness of the Forest for availability in conducting research activities.

No progress to report in 2001.

Demonstration

Use the Forest as a land base on which to demonstrate sound land management practices applicable to similar lands regardless of ownership.

No progress to report in 2001.

Technology Transfer

Incorporate new knowledge and improved technology in managing the Forest lands.

Nebraska National Forest staff working with US Fish & Wildlife research scientists published 2 technical publications in peer-reviewed journals. One report dealt with monitoring grassland structure and the second report was on optimizing habitats for black-tailed prairie dogs.

Inform and assist potential users in applying research findings and sharing experiences gained through application of various management practices.

No progress to report in 2001.

Personnel

Provide EEO opportunities.

No progress to report in 2001.

Improve career development opportunities for employees.

No progress to report in 2001.

Implementation Monitoring Results

Implementation monitoring describes how well the LRMP standards, guidelines, and objectives prescribed in the Plan are being carried out.

Management Plan Activities & Outputs

The following items were contained in the 2001 Management Attainment Report for the Nebraska National Forest and associated units:

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	UNITS OF MEASURE	TARGET ASSIGNED	TARGET MET
BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS / EVALUATIONS	Tasks	0	0
BONDED NON-ENERGY OPERATIONS PROCESSED	OPERATIONS	0	0
ENERGY ACRES PROCESSED	ACRES	0	0
ENERGY OPERATIONS ADMINISTERED TO STANDARD	OPERATIONS	23	23
ENERGY OPERATIONS PROCESSED	OPERATIONS	0	23
FOREST RESOURCE INVENTORY	M ACRES	0	0
GEOLOGIC MANAGEMENT AREAS ADMINISTERED	AREAS	10	10
GEOLOGIC PERMITS & REPORTS COMPLETED	DOCUMENTS	5	5
GRAZING ALLOTMENT ADMINISTRATION TO STANDARD	ALLOT	0	320
GRAZING ALLOTMENTS ANALYZED/NEPA DECISIONS IMPL	ALLOT	0	7
HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION (APPROP)	M ACRES	0	0
HERITAGE INVENTORY	M ACRES	1	1
HERITAGE SITES EVALUATED	SITES	7	7
HERITAGE SITES INTERPRETED	SITES	2	2
HERITAGE SITES PRESERVED & PROTECTED	SITES	28	28
INLAND FISH LAKES RESTORED OR ENHANCED	ACRES	5	5

INLAND FISH STREAMS RESTORED OR ENHANCED	MILES	2	2
LAND EXCHANGE – FEE SIMPLE INTEREST	ACRES	1080	1080
LAND LINE LOCATION	MILES	25	25
LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT (EXCLUDING EXCHANGES)	ACRES	40	40
LANDSCAPE/WATERSHED SCALE ASSMTS COMPLETED	ASSMTS	0	0
LRMP MONITORING & EVALUATION	REPORTS	1	1
LRMP REVISIONS/NEW PLANS COMPLETED	PLANS	1	1
LRMP REVISIONS/NEW PLANS INITIATED	PLANS	0	0
NEW BOUNDRY MARKED TO STANDARD	MILES	0	0
NOXIOUS WEED TREATMENT	ACRES	6890	7504
RANGE NONSTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS COMPLETED	ACRES	783	783
RANGE STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS	STRUCTURES	0	55
RANGELAND MONITORED & EVAULATED	M ACRES	175	175
RECREATION SPECIAL USES ADMIN	PERMITS	12	12
REVERINE VALLEY SEGMENT SCALE INVENTORY	MILES	30	30
RIGHTS OF WAYS ACQUIRED	MILES	0	4
ROAD CONSTRUCTION	MILES	0	0
ROADS DECOMMISSIONED	MILES	0	0
ROADS FULLY MAINTAINED	MILES	43	43
SEASONAL CAPICITY AVAILABLE - TOTAL	MILLION PAOT	.5	.5
SOIL & WATER RESOURCE IMPROVEMENTS	ACRES	430	430
SPECIAL USE APPLICATIONS PROCESSED	PERMITS	6	6
SPECIAL USE PERMITS ADMIN TO STANDARD	PERMITS	148	148
TE&S AQUATIC LAKE HABITAT RESTORED AND ENHANCED	ACRES	4	4
TE&S AQUATIC STREAM HABITAT RESTORED OR ENHANCED	MILES	1	1
TE&S SPECIES HABITAT INVENTORY	M ACRES	0	0
TE&S TERRESTRIAL HABITAT INVENTORIED	ACRES	0	0
TE&S TERRESTRIAL HABITAT RESTORED OR ENHANCED	ACRES	235	235
TERRESTRIAL ECOL UNIT INV / SUBSECTION LEVEL	M ACRES	0	0
TERRESTRIAL FAUNA INV / LANDSCAPE LEVEL	M ACRES	63	63
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE HABITAT RESTORED/ENHANCED	ACRES	1971	1971
TRAIL CONSCTUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION	MILES	5	5
VOLUMN OFFERED - NEW	CCF	0	0
VOLUMN SOLD	CCF	0	0
WILDLIFE HABITAT INVENTORY	M ACRES	0	0

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance

Are NEPA documents in compliance with the Management Plan? Are the projects being implemented in accordance with the documents?

No monitoring to report.

Recreation & Heritage Resources

Are visual quality objectives being met?

Visual quality objectives have not been developed for units of the Nebraska National Forest and therefore, monitoring is not done to determine if they were being meet.

All units were inventoried under the new Scenery Management System, in 1996 and 1997. Mapping under the new system incorporates viewing distance zones, concern level (public importance), scenic attractiveness (indicator of intrinsic scenic beauty of a landscape), scenic class (determined by combining the scenic attractiveness with distance zone and concern levels), and existing scenic integrity (state of naturalness). The LRMP revision process now nearing completion is developing a landscape character description and will consider establishing scenic integrity objectives as part of the final decision.

Are visitor expectations being met?

Customer comment cards are available at all administrative offices and visitor centers. The comment cards are mailed to the Washington Office and forwarded onto the Forest Supervisor for review. Each card is read. Of the cards received on the Nebraska National Forest, over 95% of the cards reflect positive experiences to those who make comments. Comments of negative experiences received are promptly acted upon. The Forest Staff utilizes constructive comments to improve management.

Are facilities accessible and maintained at an acceptable level?

Facilities meeting accessibility standards include the National Grasslands Visitor Center, the Forest Supervisor's Office, the Wall District Office, the Fort Pierre District Office, three campsites at the Bessey Recreation Complex, the Scott Lookout toilet, the Bessey District fish pond, the Pioneer rest stop, the Bessey Tree Nursery office, Toadstool Park, Roberts and Soldier Creek trailheads, as well as ramps for mounting horses at the Roberts, Soldier Creek, and Outrider Trailheads. There are accessible toilet facilities at the Roberts trailhead, Soldier Creek, Whitetail, Natick, French Creek, and Steer Creek campgrounds, the Hudson Meng Bone bed facilities and the National Grassland Visitor Center.

All new planned facilities will meet accessibility standards or will be modified as needed to comply with ADA policies. The Nebraska National Forest is modifying administrative facilities for all units (a copy of the facility master plan is available from the Forest Supervisor's Office). As these facilities are modified, they will meet ADA accessibility standards. The Nebraska National Forest and associated units continue to make facilities and programs.

Are heritage resources being protected?

Prior to any proposed action, heritage resource surveys are completed to ensure heritage sites are properly identified. As each site is discovered a condition assessment is conducted and a basic management strategy is formulated. For the majority of the sites on the Forest this means revisiting the resource as new projects take place encompassing or in close proximity to the heritage resource and re-assessing its condition to ensure it is not being compromised by natural forces or by human activities. For those sites determined to be at risk to the proposed activities or actions, steps are taken to maintain the condition of the site. In some cases this means

rerouting roads or fence lines affecting the site, in other cases this means limiting public access to the site.

The Nebraska National Forest consults with and does get concurrence from the Nebraska or South Dakota State Historic Preservation Offices, on all projects that may affect known heritage resources.

Are unauthorized uses or natural agents damaging or destroying heritage resource properties?

No formal mechanisms were in place in 2001 to monitor deterioration or damage of eligible sites. A strategy for assessing and managing these sites is being developed. When the sites are revisited their condition is assessed and any changes wrought by natural or man-made forces are noted and the appropriate authority informed. At minimum the district ranger is notified, and as necessary, the Forest law enforcement officer, so proper steps are taken to ensure the damage is limited and future damage is avoided.

Wilderness

Are standards and guidelines being achieved?

No monitoring to report.

Are wilderness visitor expectations being met?

No monitoring to report.

Minerals

Are operating plans being followed and reclamation completed to meet management requirements and standards and guidelines?

For the year 2001, oil and gas leasing activities on the Nebraska National Forest were relatively static. There were a total of 21 operations under APD/SUPO, including drilling, producing, shut-in, injection, disposal, and under reclamation. One APD expired without being drilled and there were no applications for seismic activity. All operations were administered to standard.

Are fossil resources being protected?

The paleontological resources on the Nebraska National Forest administrative units spans a wide realm of depositional environments ranging from deep marine deposits to terrestrial volcanic deposits. Field inventories completed since 1991 have identified 162 sensitive paleontological sites within the Oglala National Grassland. Toadstool Park, also within the Oglala NG, contains very significant fossil resources. A fossil inventory on the Pine Ridge Ranger District identified 15 fossil sites.

The Bessey Ranger District and the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest are located within central Nebraska's dominant geological feature, the Nebraska Sand Hills. Although these geologic units are known to contain fossils, an inventory conducted on these administrative units in 1995 did not locate any fossil localities.

South Dakota School of Mines and Technology paleontologists concentrating on the southwestern portion of the Buffalo Gap NG identified 63 paleontological localities that are primarily marine vertebrates. Another inventory conducted by Paleontological Investigations, Inc. identified 67 fossil localities, with 25 on the Fall River District, 37 on the Wall Ranger District and 5 on the Ft. Pierre National Grassland.

The Fall River District inventoried 10,000 acres in 1999 in the Railroad Buttes Area, and documented 103 fossil sites. During 2001, paleontological inventories were conducted on another 5,200 acres on the Fall River District. In 2002, paleontologists from South Dakota School of Mines and Technology will collect more Cretaceous animals and data under agreement with the Forest.

Paleontologists from the Rocky Mountain Region have developed a fossil management program that is being implemented by the Nebraska National Forest units. The major goals of fossil management include:

- To develop strategies for protection of significant fossil resources;
- Provide opportunities for public participation in educational programs and projects ~~on~~ with the fossil resource;
- Provide training to Forest Service personnel regarding fossil resources;
- Develop and foster partnerships with other state and federal agencies, educational and research institutions to protect, to curate, to inventory, to excavate, and to interpret fossil resources;
- Give equal consideration to fossil resources during NEPA and planning as other resources, and
- Develop well defined polices and procedures regarding management of the resource.

Fossil resources bring high values in commercial markets. Because of the economic incentive to fossil collecting it is difficult to halt illegal collecting. Where Federally owned fossil resources are adjacent to private lands, it is essential to accurately post the property boundaries. Another strategy is to train Forest law enforcement personnel in fossil issues and to patrol potential fossil theft areas. To be effective these strategies require sufficient funding. Unauthorized fossil collection is expected as long as values are high and law enforcement presence is low.

Lands & Special Uses

Does the current land ownership pattern allow for efficient resource management?

As land exchanges, purchases, and donations are completed, the landownership pattern allows for more efficient Forest Service land and resource management and public use. Management costs are reduced by not having to identify, mark, and fence out adjacent non-Federal lands and the acquired land can be managed as larger blocks National Forest system land. Public use is enhanced by acquiring new access to existing National Forest System land and by blocking up

patchwork ownership patterns which reduces the concern of trespass while accessing or using National Forest system land.

How many rights-of-way were obtained for public access?

Four rights of way were acquired. Two were acquired for a utility corridor associated with the construction of a bunkhouse in Hot Springs for the Fall Ranger District staff. The other two were acquired with the completion of two land exchange cases. The two Rights of Way acquired with the completion of two land exchanges will provide additional public access to on the Buffalo Gap and Oglala National Grasslands where public motorized access had been very limited due to physical restrictions or non-existent.

The Nebraska National Forest has acquired 36 rights-of-way since 1984. (Note: The 1999 Annual Monitoring Report erroneously stated 39 rights-of-ways were acquired when it should have more accurately stated 34.)

Wildlife

Are desired habitat conditions for management indicator species being met?

Management indicator species (MIS) and primary habitats they represent are as follows:

Plains sharp-tailed grouse (Sand hills prairie, wheatgrass-grama grass),

Pronghorn (sagebrush-wheatgrass),

Mule deer (shrubland, riparian, wooded draws, juniper breaks, etc.),

Wild turkey (ponderosa pine, coniferous plantations, etc.),

Black-footed ferret (prairie dog colonies-grasslands).

The Forest Service has also been monitoring height and density of grassland cover left after livestock grazing, which provides better wildlife habitat information than estimating the forage cattle actually eat. For rangeland health determinations, it is more important to know what is left than what has been removed, which is referred to as residual cover. Visual obstruction readings (VOR) are commonly used to measure and quantify potential residual cover levels on the northern plains and elsewhere. VORs are a measure of the height and density of grassland vegetation and represent the height that the residual cover totally (100%) screens a calibrated pole from view. Cover classes are delineated in 2-inch increments and range from <2 inches to 6+ inches.

The Wall District has established over 200 permanent Robel pole transects to monitored residual cover levels across the District as well as impacts of grazing management. Grassland structure on the Wall District has been nearly balanced across all cover classes since 1996 with over 70% having 3 inch or higher cover levels. On the Oglala National Grassland, the average baseline residual cover from 1994 to 2000 was in the 2-4 inch class. On the two major range sites on the

Fort Pierre National Grassland, average residual cover potential over a number of years has been about 6.5 inches. Vegetation structure across the grassland has varied greatly, with a significant area falling into each cover class. A significant area of the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest has cover in the <2 inch category, and areas supporting intermediate and higher cover levels are becoming more common both in the hills and in the valleys and lowlands. Additional data is being compiled for the Bessey Ranger District. Robel pole transects were completed on the Bessey and McKelvie Units in Fall, 2001. Fall River ran 196 Robel pole transects in 2001. The results of the survey were similar to the Wall District.

The effects of management activities on these species' habitats were monitored and are assumed to reflect the effects on habitat conditions/suitability for species with similar habitat needs. Management Plan direction for these species is to maintain habitat conditions at a level no lower than 40 percent of the biological potential of an area. Management Plan direction for selected areas also states that habitat needs for MIS species will be emphasized.

Plains Sharp-Tailed Grouse

- Fort Pierre National Grassland and Wall District - Surveys of vegetation structure over a number of years indicate that the grassland has been averaging above the 40% minimum habitat potential required in the Forest Plan.

Pronghorn Antelope

- Buffalo Gap National Grassland (Surveys indicate that the 40% minimum conditions for habitat are being met).

- Oglala National Grassland (A research study on pronghorn habitat selection and fawn mortality is currently being conducted. Other associated inventories and surveys already completed will be incorporated into the final analysis. All ONG fence lines have been inventoried and evaluated for compliance with big-game specification. Future projects will prioritize these sections of fence for needed modifications to meet big-game specifications. These projects are partnered with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the Nebraska Bow hunters Association.

Wild Turkey

- The Nebraska National Forest maintains adequate turkey habitat conditions on the Pine Ridge. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission continues to sell unlimited permits for wild turkey in the Pine Ridge Unit.

Black-footed Ferret

- Buffalo Gap National Grassland (Conata Basin) (Surveys show that the ferret population continues to build with 64 litters and 182 kits born in 2001).

Mule Deer

- Ft. Pierre National Grassland and Wall District survey of areas with potential to grow hardwood vegetation have shown that shrubs growing in those sites provide mule deer habitat at about 40 percent of potential.

Are Management Plan levels for prairie dog management and control being met?

The Washington Office has placed a restriction on the chemical control of prairie dogs in 1999. This restriction outlined the conditions for restrictive controls on prairie dogs.

Were planned habitat improvement projects completed and/or maintained?

In 2001, 1,971 acres of terrestrial wildlife habitat were enhanced.

Aquatic Habitat (Fisheries)

Through cooperative efforts with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Office of Fisheries and Wildlife Assistance, the Forest Service has established special fishing regulations on several small impoundments on the Fort Pierre National Grassland to improve the quality of these fisheries.

What are the current conditions and extent of fisheries?

Results of the fisheries surveys conducted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission document a continued loss of warm water fisheries on the national grasslands.

The Wall District and the Fort Pierre National Grasslands have been successfully managing warm water fisheries in conjunction with South Dakota Game, Fish, & Parks.

The west half of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland is not meeting public demand for warm and cold water fishing. Many old dams that historically provided good fishing have silted in and no longer provide dependable and quality recreational fisheries.

The Wall District and the Fort Pierre National Grasslands have been successfully managing warm water fisheries in conjunction with South Dakota Game, Fish, & Parks.

There are cold-water fisheries in Soldier Creek, East and West Ash Creeks and Bordeaux Creek (limited). The Pine Ridge District is meeting cold water fishing demand, but is not meeting demands for warm water fishing on the Oglala National Grassland. Agate Reservoir on the Oglala is a possible warm water fishery; however, siltation has made the lake too shallow to prevent frequent winter fish kill. Dredging is too expensive to consider. The Forest Service and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission would like to develop a warm water fishery in the area. Funding is a limitation.

Are planned fishery improvement projects being completed and maintained?

In 2001, 5 acres of fishponds and 2 miles of fish streams were restored.

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species

Are habitat inventories and population status assessments completed for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species?

An environmental analysis was completed in 1999 to reintroduce blowout Penstemon, an endangered plant in the Nebraska Sand hills; implementation began in 2000 with the planting of 980 Blowout Penstemon. Of these approximately 200 plants remain with about 25% producing flowering and fruiting stalks in the 2001 season. Also in May, 2001 two additional sites were planted with a total of 1200 seedlings. As of this fall, about 700 seedlings have survived in these sites.

Were planned habitat improvement projects completed?

Captive-bred black-footed ferrets were reintroduced in 1994 through 1999 into prairie dog colony complexes that extend over portions of the Badlands National Park and Buffalo Gap National Grassland. This program is a cooperative effort involving the Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and South Dakota Game, Fish, & Parks. In addition, assistance from private landowners and other government agencies was essential to the implementation of this recovery effort. Many land exchanges between the Forest Service and private landowners consolidated federal ownership in and near the reintroduction area, reducing private landowner concerns with the reintroduction program. In 1997, pre-conditioning pens were constructed on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland in cooperation with the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Foundation, the National Forest Foundation, Badlands National Park, and the Wall Ranger District. In 1998, a prairie dog shooting restriction was implemented across the entire Conata Basin area of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland to increase and maintain quality ferret habitat. In 2001, fall/winter surveys indicate the current black-footed ferret population on the National Grasslands is approximately 220 ferrets. Over 180 wild-born litters with over 500 wild-born kits have been produced on the National Grasslands since 1997. The reintroduction of black-footed ferrets has been very successful on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and wild born ferrets from the National Grasslands are being translocated to other reintroduction sites.

Blowout Penstemon (*Penstemon haydenii*) occurs on the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest, the Bessey unit of the Nebraska National Forest and adjoining lands. Both units are identified as potential reintroduction sites in the Blowout Penstemon recovery plan. In 2000, Blowout Penstemon was reintroduced in suitable blowout Penstemon habitat on the Bessey District. Of these approximately 200 plants remain with about 25% producing flowering and fruiting stalks in the 2001 season. Also in May, 2001 two additional sites were planted with a total of 1200 seedlings. As of this fall, about 700 seedlings have survived in these sites.

Were the effects of other activities and projects on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species assessed?

All projects examined under the National Environmental Policy Act have included evaluations of effects on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.

Adjustments in livestock grazing practices have been made along the Cheyenne River on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. These adjustments will enhance cottonwood regeneration along the river. These management adjustments will help maintain and improve this area as winter habitat and potential nesting habitat for bald eagles. Monitoring of the American Bald Eagle use along the Cheyenne River continues annually.

Rangeland Vegetation and Livestock Management

During 2001, 320 allotments were monitored for their compliance with Management Plan standards and guidelines.

In 2001 55 range structural improvements were constructed, and 783 acres of nonstructural range improvements were accomplished.

Are forage or rangeland conditions (seral stage) meeting Management Plan direction?

No monitoring to report.

Are allotment management plans being developed to meet Management Plan standards and guidelines?

No monitoring to report.

What is the infestation level of noxious weeds, and what is being treated?

In 2001, 7,504 acres of noxious weeds were treated.

Currently, the Bessey Ranger District and Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest contain mostly leafy spurge (39 acres) with 39 acres being treated and Canada thistle (10 acre) with 1 acre being treated.

The Wall Ranger District (East half of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland) has 2,200 acres of Canada thistle, 900 acres of hoary cress, 100 acres of Russian knapweed, and no leafy spurge. The large acreages reflect a more complete inventory and the effects of the massive infestation in the Badlands National Park encroaching on to the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. Badlands National Park has formed a Badlands Weed Management Area Working Group. The Forest Service, County Weed & Pest Boards, and local landowners are all members of the working group. The group is addressing the noxious weed problem across the entire Badlands Weed Management Area through unified control efforts using both chemical and biological control methods. In 2001, all parties have taken aggressive action on noxious weed management.

The Fall River Ranger District (West Half of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland) has in excess of 3,000 acres of Canada thistle, 25 acres of Russian Knapweed, 25 acres of Hoary Cress, 2 acres of leafy spurge, and 5 locations are infested with Salt Cedar (Tamarisk). In FY 2001 1,995 acres of noxious weeds were treated mechanically, chemically and through the use of biocontrol agents. 1,876 acres of weeds were treated through the use of three county crews and the district spray crew. The District continued to use Fall River and Custer County for weed control through the use of Participating Agreements. This year the District signed a third Participating

Agreement with the Pennington County Weed and Pest Department. The participating agreements contracted with the counties for spray applications in addition to authorizing them to spray National Grassland adjacent to private lands that they were treating. The agreements have provided increased management efficiency for both the federal as well as the local governments. In addition to the above, the three Grazing Associations allocated sufficient Conservation Practice funds for the treatment of 114 acres of noxious weeds. In an effort to increase awareness of noxious weeds, efficiency in their control and to cooperate with adjoining landowners, the Fall River District has continued to participate, coordinate and cooperate with the two weed management districts formed within the boundaries of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland; the French Creek Weed management area in Custer County and the Horsehead Weed Management Area within Fall River County. In addition, it is working with the Fall River County Weed and Pest Department in the formation of a third Weed Management Area located along the Cheyenne in western Fall River County.

Less than an acre of Russian knapweed was found and sprayed on Fort Pierre National Grassland. One hundred fifty acres of Canada thistle was treated on that national grassland.

The Pine Ridge Ranger District treated 1,054 acres of noxious weeds (primarily leafy spurge and Canada thistle) on the National Forest portion of the District and 1,950 acres (Canada thistle) on the Oglala National Grassland portion of the District. In addition we contracted with Dawes County Weed Control under a Participating Agreement to control 540 acres of Canada thistle on the Oglala National Grassland. We continue to be proactive in noxious weed education and awareness and instrumental in the formation of the Ash Creek Weed Management area. A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant of $65,650 under the "Pulling Together Imitative" was awarded April 1, 2002 for the Ash Creek Weed Management Project of which the District is included.

Are fences being constructed to provide big game movement?

The major concern is for the movement of pronghorn antelope. Pronghorn usually go under fences rather than jump them. All new fence construction meets pronghorn movement standards. As fences are reconstructed or replaced, they will be designed to meet pronghorn standards. Fences are being inventoried on the Forest and Grasslands.

All Oglala National Grassland fences have been inventoried and evaluated for compliance with big-game specification. Future management will prioritize these sections of fence for needed modifications to meet big-game specifications.

Do water tanks have properly designed animal escape ramps?

Most existing water tanks on the Nebraska National Forest and associated units have escape ramps and all new water tanks are built with this feature.

Riparian

Are we managing riparian areas to meet the Standards and Guidelines in the Management Plan?

No monitoring to report.

Are we moving toward meeting the upper mid-seral ecological condition?

McKelvie NF: 446 total riparian acres, Steer Creek willow is scarce and usually grazed before maturity. Most of Steer Creek has no discernible stream banks usually consisting of grazed grass to water's edge in an early seral stage without woody vegetation. These areas are not moving towards Plan objectives. To move toward Plan objectives the riparian areas would have to be fenced or otherwise protected until woody vegetation approaches maturity, reaching a point that it could withstand some grazing. The Lord Lakes complex does have good riparian vegetation on most of the areas that are fenced. Percentages of the wetland/riparian areas within the different seral stages are unknown.

Buffalo Gap NG (Fall River): 5,797 total riparian acres, 30% are verified meeting Plan objectives, 56% are verified moving toward meeting Plan objectives, 7% are estimated moving toward meeting Plan objectives, 6% are verified not meeting nor moving toward meeting Plan objectives and 1% are estimated not meeting nor moving toward meeting Plan objectives.

Wall District (West Half Buffalo Gap National Grassland): 2,928 total riparian acres, 30% are verified meeting Plan objectives, 65% are verified moving toward meeting Plan objectives, and 5% are verified not meeting nor moving toward meeting Plan objectives.

The Pine Ridge Ranger District: 5,388 total riparian acres, 92% are verified meeting or moving toward meeting Plan objectives, 6% are verified not meeting nor moving toward meeting Plan objectives and 1% are undetermined status.

Timber

In 2001, 2500 cubic feet of timber was offered for sale through fuel wood permits, and no acres of land were reforested.

Are regeneration survival and stocking standards being met?

No artificial reforestation has occurred within the past 8 years.

Is Charles E. Bessey Nursery producing healthy stock in desired numbers?

No monitoring to report.

Is the seed bank being properly managed to maintain high viability and record accuracy at the Charles E. Bessey Nursery?

No monitoring to report.

Are pesticides being used in a safe manner at the Charles E. Bessey Nursery?

No monitoring to report.

Soil and Water

Are standards and guidelines being implemented on projects with the potential to impact soil and water resources?

No monitoring to report.

Transportation System

What is the trend in closing roads and limiting access to the Nebraska National Forest and associated units?

The trend is to close roads contributing to riparian health and resource degradation that are not on the classified road system. Seasonal road closures are implemented during high fire danger periods, and where damage to the road surface and subsurface is occurring during inclement weather or seasonal changes. A transportation plan is being derived to assess the location of specified level roads and use to specific forest recreation areas.

Currently there are few restrictions to motorized travel; approximately 18,480 acres have year-round motorized travel restrictions. The largest areas with travel restrictions are the Congressionally designated Soldier Creek Wilderness and Pine Ridge National Recreation Area, both located on the Pine Ridge Ranger District. In addition to year around travel restrictions, the Bessey Ranger District and Fort Pierre National Grassland have seasonal motorized travel restrictions during hunting season. Motorized travel on the entire Fort Pierre National Grassland is restricted to roads during hunting season.

In accordance with the final National Forest System Road Management rule dated January 12, 2001, a Forest scale, science based, roads analysis is in progress and expected to be completed by summer 2002. This roads analysis will identify the minimum Forest Service road system needed for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands and resources, while providing safe and efficient travel and minimizing adverse environmental effects. The proposed Revised Plan Goal 4.a requires site-specific transportation and Roads Analyses, and defers site-specific decisions for up to 5 years. Until transportation and Roads Analyses have been completed, existing travel management will remain in effect.

What is the trend in road improvements and providing better access to the Nebraska National Forest and associated units?

The Forest maintained 43 miles of Forest Development Roads in 2001.

The Forest is presently working with the Federal Highway Administration to complete Soldier Creek Road to the Forest Boundary. Road improvements made on the Nebraska National Forest

and associated units are based on Forest Staff direction and available funding. The forest also submitted Toadstool Road, Circle Road, Natick Road, Gaston Road, West Ash Creek, and Merrit-Niobrara Road as Public Forest Service Roads, PFSR. These roads will be improved when funding becomes available.

Access to federals lands is a consideration when proposing land exchanges. Rights-of-Way across private lands are acquired when needed to access to Federal Lands. In 2001, four rights-of-way were acquired from private landowners.

Is travel management accomplishing resource objectives for roads, trails, and areas?

The Nebraska National Forest does not have a specific travel management plan. In accordance with the final National Forest System Road Management rule dated January 12, 2001, a Forest scale, science based, Roads Analysis is in progress and expected to be completed by summer 2002. The proposed Revised Plan Goal 4.a requires site-specific transportation and Roads Analyses and defers site-specific decisions for up to 5 years. Until transportation and Roads Analyses have been completed, existing travel management will remain in effect; however, best management practices are being implemented to maintain and protect roads, and adjoining resources.

Effectiveness Monitoring Results

Effectiveness monitoring determines if LRMP standards, guidelines, and objectives are producing identifiable results in moving toward a desired condition.

Wildlife

Are habitat improvement projects producing the desired results?

Areas in which livestock grazing practices have been adjusted are creating better wildlife habitat as evidenced by increased game and non-game species populations. Wildlife structures installed by the Forest Service and Cooperators in addition to land acquisition with desirable wildlife habitat have also benefited wildlife.

Riparian

Are vegetative treatments providing desired results? Also, are upper mid-seral stages in riparian areas being achieved, and how does this relate to aquatic habitat?

On the Pine Ridge Ranger District (both National Forest and Oglala National Grassland) livestock grazing management is providing desired results on the majority of the riparian areas. Hardwood regeneration is occurring along with increase in willow and shrub species. Areas are moving toward reaching upper mid-seral stage, which can be described as hardwood trees 10 to 80 years old. More time will be needed for trees to grow before we can achieve upper mid-seral stage.

Rangeland Vegetation

Are standards and guidelines for rangeland condition being met?

The Pine Ridge Ranger District established permanent utilization cages within 4 allotments on the National Forest portion of the District. Additional utilization studies and riparian health studies were conducted in 9 allotments.

Water

Is implementation of riparian prescriptions preventing non-point sources of sediment and meeting state standards? Also, are water yield increases causing channel and resource damage?

No monitoring to report.

Fire

Is the fire program cost effective?

No monitoring to report.

Are fuel treatments effectively meeting habitat improvement and fire suppression objectives?

The Fall River Ranger District completed a 300-acre prescribed fire on French Creek, east of Fairburn. Cooperative agencies included a local VFD, the Rocky Mountain Research Center, and Black Hills National Forest. The prescribed burn management objective was to setback crested wheatgrass while allowing desirable native species to expand. Studies by the RMRC will be ongoing for 3 years to monitor the effects and final results of this prescribed fire.

The Richland Wildlife Area was the site of Fort Pierre National Grassland's first prescribed burn. In late September, 300 acres were burned to re-institute one of the disturbance patterns of the native prairie. Objectives were to reduce litter and fuel buildup and to recycle plant material. This will improve plant vigor and allow native plants to effectively compete with undesirable invasive plants. The burn plan was safely and successfully implemented, and the area will be monitored to determine to what extend the objectives were realized.

Air

Are the Nebraska National Forest and associated units effectively complying with state air quality standards for prescribed burning?

No monitoring has been completed to determine if we are meeting air quality objectives. State air quality standards are outlined in each prescribed burn plan and will be followed. One

thousand six hundred and forty-nine acres of prescribed burns were accomplished on the Nebraska National Forest units in the year 2001: 849 acres on Bessey, 300 acres on Fort Pierre, 300 acres on Fall River, and 200 acres on Pine Ridge. These burns were in compliance with state air quality standards.

Insects and Disease

Are treatment activities effectively reducing or preventing increases in insects and diseases?

No monitoring to report.

Soil

Are the standards and guidelines effective in maintaining soil productivity?

Validation Monitoring Results

Validation Monitoring determines if the assumptions, data, and models used to develop the Management Plan are correct, or if there are better ways, given new information and technology, to address resource management challenges.

Wildlife

Do the habitat models reflect state-of-the-art knowledge for the wildlife species at the local level?

Forest Service biologists are collecting field data that will be useful in evaluating wildlife habitat based on local-site conditions and potentials. Scientific literature on selected wildlife species and their habitats also continues to be compiled and analyzed. In 2002 we anticipate incorporating an Arc view version of the Habcap Model for the national grasslands and national forests.

Riparian

Is the upper mid-seral stage providing adequate protection for riparian habitat quality?

No monitoring to report.

Rangeland Vegetation

Is current ecological analysis adequately describing current vegetation for ecosystem management?

No monitoring to report.

Completed Amendments To The Management Plan

There were no additional Forest Plan Amendments made in 2001.

A summary of previous amendments follows:

#1 Adds direction for the Soldier Creek Wilderness, which was designated as wilderness after the Forest Plan was completed.

#2 Changed sheep allotment bottom wire specifications from 10 inches to 6 inches, corrected a human error in the board foot/cubic foot ratio, and lowered the rotation age for Ponderosa Pine regeneration harvests from 100 - 160 years to 80 - 160 years.

#3 Increased land purchase, acquisition, and exchange goals to agree with the narrative portion of the Forest Plan.

#4 expands the goal statements for recreation management.

#5 Changes Management Plan direction for prairie dog management, establishing goals to maintain 6,500-8,000 acres of untreated prairie dog colonies and a maximum of 19,000 acres of prairie dog colonies on the Nebraska National Forest and associated units. In addition, prairie dog management objections were established for specific locations.

#6 Makes 25 minor changes to the Management Plan as a result of the 1988 monitoring report relating to Table III-1 and Chapter IV of the Management Plan.

#7 Makes changes in Chapter IV of the Management Plan (monitoring) to reflect the need to add effectiveness and validation monitoring to the annual monitoring report.

#8 The Nebraska National Forest and associated units amended the Management Plan in 1995 to replace the old oil and gas stipulation format with the new uniform format for oil and gas lease stipulations prepared by the Rocky Mountain Regional Coordinating Committee.

Needed Amendments To The Management Plan

The following items have been identified as potential amendments to the current Management Plan. Since the plan is currently in revision, we have no plans to take on these amendments but to address issues in the plan revision process.

Wildlife

Standards and guidelines for:

1) Habitat management for MIS (mule deer, pronghorn, wild turkey and sharp-tailed grouse)

2) Residual cover (grassland structure)

3) Predator management

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive

Direction for:

1) Blowout Penstemon

2) Western Prairie Fringed Orchid

3) American Burying Beetle

4) Sensitive Species

Standards and guidelines for:

Habitat management for sensitive species (species or guilds)

Management Plan Revision

A number of issues have come to light as a result of present and past monitoring, public comments, and interagency coordination. These issues are listed below and will be used as the initial need for change statements in the Management Plan revision process:

Biodiversity

Conserving biological diversity of grassland ecosystems is a relatively new issue that has developed since the existing Management Plan was developed. Some people are interested in seeing conservation of natural diversity on public lands in the Great Plains. Current management practices may not be conserving biodiversity.

Prairie dogs were recently petitioned for listing as endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. They now exist in about 1-5 percent of their historic range. Public interest and concern has increased substantially, indicating a need to review the existing prairie dog program. Many associated species ferret, swift fox, ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, mountain plover are endangered, threatened, or experiencing significant declines.

Naturally occurring wetlands are scarce ecosystems on the prairies. They have been heavily impacted in the past and are key habitat components of many wildlife species.

Many plantations on the Bessey Ranger District are getting old and dying out. Jack pine is not sustaining itself. Cedar stands are sustaining themselves.

The riparian prescription should provide a variety of seral stages based upon site potential and should be implemented with an understanding of riparian condition on private lands.

Community and Life-Style

Many national forest and grassland management decisions involve resolving conflicts between local and national values and can significantly affect local economies and individuals.

Fire and Fuels

The effective fuel management costs exceed reasonable foreseeable funding levels.

Fossils

The current Management Plan does not provide fossil management guidance. A decision on the proposed revised Management Plan is expected in the summer of 2002. The proposed plan does contain Goals (2.c.), Standards and Guidelines (E. Paleontological Resources), and guidance for conducting Paleontologic surveys (Appendix J Paleontology). In addition six Special Interest Area have been identified for special management of fossil resources, and two areas with paleontologic resources have been placed in a Management Area to be proposed for Wilderness.

Paleontologic Area Management in the Proposed Forest Plan Revision

Area Name	Proposed Management Area	Approximate Acreage
Edgemont Shark Locality	MA 2.1 (SIA)	940
Wallace Ranch Localities	MA 2.1 (SIA)	420
Marietta South	MA 2.1 (SIA)	260
One-Mile Hill	MA 2.1 (SIA)	630
Hudson-Meng	MA 2.1 (SIA)	40
Toadstool Park	MA 2.1 (SIA)	2000
Indian Creek	MA 1.2 (Recommended for Wilderness)	23,890
Red Shirt	MA 1.2 (Recommended for Wilderness)	13,750
Total		**41,930**

Livestock Grazing

The public continues to have interest in the levels of permitted grazing and other uses on the National Forests and Grasslands to provide for both sustainable communities and sustainable ecosystems.

Oil and Gas Leasing

A decision is expected on the proposed revised Land Use Management Plan for the Nebraska National Forest in the summer of 2002. The revised Plan contains Standards and Guidelines for oil, gas and energy related operations in Chapter 1, D. Minerals and Energy Resources, and in Chapter 3 in the specific Management Area Direction. Oil and gas lease stipulations needed to implement the revised plan standards and guidelines are in revised Plan Appendix D.

Recreation and Travel

The Nebraska National Forest offers a variety of recreational experiences and unique grassland and forest settings. Use and interest in recreating and traveling on public lands are increasing. The proposed revised Nebraska National Forest plan has standards and guidelines for recreation in Chapter 1, K. Recreation; Chapter 2, in the direction for each Geographic Area; and in Chapter 3, in the direction for each Management Area.

The proposed Revised Plan Goal 4.a requires site-specific transportation and Roads Analyses, and defers site-specific decisions for up to 5 years. The revised Forest Plan contains standards and guidelines for travel management in Chapter 1, Q. Infrastructure Use and Management and the Management Area Descriptions in Chapter 3. Until transportation and Roads Analyses have been completed, existing travel management will remain in effect.

A forest wide roads analysis was completed in 2002.

Roadless/Undeveloped Areas

The present Management Plan deferred making a wilderness decision on areas identified in the 1979 RARE II process until the next Management Plan revision (the one now being finalized). Because of large land exchanges that have occurred since 1985, there were additional areas ~~that~~ meeting roadless criteria. Additionally, the public identified a number of areas as having roadless characteristics. Both the inventoried roadless areas and the public identified areas were evaluated in the NGP plan FEIS and are identified in the table following:

Inventoried Roadless Areas and Public Proposed Areas

Inventoried Roadless Areas	**Acres***
Buffalo Gap National Grassland - Fall River	
Red Shirt RARE II	9,210
Red Shirt	7,130
Cheyenne River	7,570
Jim Wilson Canyon	6,020
First Black Canyon	4,960
Buffalo Gap National Grassland - Wall	
Indian Creek	25,100
Public Proposed Areas	
Buffalo Gap National Grassland - Fall River	
Indian Creek	*3,210+*

Inventoried Roadless Areas	Acres*
Buffalo Gap National Grassland - Wall	
Rake Creek Badlands	*12,300*
Indian Creek	*3,770+*
Fort Pierre National Grassland	
Cedar Creek	*8,730*
Pine Ridge Ranger District/Oglala National Grassland	
Sugarloaf	*9,090*
Toadstool	*5,280*
Soldier Creek	*1,830*
Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest	
Steer Creek East	*60,790*
Steer Creek West	*26,210*
Dismal River	*12,980*

*Acreages are computer-generated and rounded to the nearest 10 acres.

A decision on the NGP plan is expected in the summer of 2002.

Special area Designations

The Nebraska National Forest and associated grasslands include many unique and outstanding combinations of physical and biological resources and areas of special social interest. These are collectively referred to as "special areas." Special area designations may include: cultural and historic sites, geologic and paleontologic sites, rare habitats, botanical areas, zoological areas, wetland conservation areas, unique ecological communities, and areas of biodiversity richness.

The proposed revised Nebraska National Forest plan considers four types of special area designations: Wilderness areas, Wild and Scenic River designations, Research Natural Areas, and Special Interest Areas.

Wilderness Areas

Maintaining grassland roadless areas and designating grassland wilderness areas are important to some people. Sixteen areas were analyzed for recommendation to Congress as wilderness as part of the Northern Great Plains Plans Revision process and are listed in the following table:

Inventoried Roadless Areas and Public Proposed Areas

Inventoried Roadless Areas	Acres*	Revised Plan Acres*
Red Shirt RARE II	9,210	8,450
Red Shirt	7,130	5,300
Cheyenne River	7,570	0
Jim Wilson Canyon	6,020	0
First Black Canyon	4,960	0
Indian Creek	25,100	23,890
Public Proposed Areas		
Indian Creek (two areas)	*6,980*	*1,070*
Rake Creek Badlands	*12,300*	*0*

Inventoried Roadless Areas	Acres*	Revised Plan Acres*
Cedar Creek	*8,730*	*0*
Sugarloaf	*9,090*	*0*
Toadstool	*5,280*	*0*
Soldier Creek	*1,830*	*0*
Steer Creek East	*60,790*	*0*
Steer Creek West	*26,210*	*0*
Dismal River	*12,980*	*0*
Total	**144,190**	**1,070**

*Acreages are computer-generated and rounded to the nearest 10 acres.

Wild and Scenic River Designations

The Nebraska National Forest conducted a systematic review of all sixth-level watersheds and evaluated the free-flowing segments using Forest Service Region 2 criteria to determine if segments had any outstandingly remarkable characteristics. The table below displays the results of the Forest Service's eligibility inventory.

Wild and Scenic River Inventory.

River	Outstandingly Remarkable Features	Classification	Miles	Revised Plan Miles
Middle Loup	Bessey Nursery, Bessey recreation complex	Recreational	0.5	0.0
Cheyenne	Fisheries, wildlife, scenic, recreation	Scenic	8.6	0.0
Rapid Creek	Fisheries, wildlife	Scenic	1.7	0.0

Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are selected to provide a spectrum of relatively undisturbed areas representing a wide range of natural variability within important natural ecosystems and environments or areas with special or unique characteristics or scientific importance. There is one existing 500-acre RNA on the Nebraska National Forest, Signal Hill. In addition, eight areas were analyzed for recommendation as RNAs as part of the Northern Great Plains Plans Revision process as follows:

Nominated Research Natural Areas

RNA Name	Type	Acres	Revised Plan Acres
Steer Creek	Botanical	2,500	2,500
South Pasture, 777 Allotment	Botanical	1,560	1,560
Hay Canyon, Bochert Allotment	Botanical	1,010	0
West Wall	Botanical	1,030	1,030
Mallard	Botanical	1,030	1,030
Prairie Dog, Pasture 45	Botanical/ Zoological	940	0
West Ash, Pastures 6, 7, 11	Botanical	640	0
Tree Farm	Botanical	120	120
	Totals	**8,830**	**6,240**

Special Interest Areas

Special Interest Areas (SIAs) are managed to protect or enhance areas with unusual characteristics, such as scenic, historical, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological or others. Management emphasis is on protecting or enhancing and, where appropriate, developing and interpreting for public education and recreation, areas with unusual characteristics. Twenty areas were analyzed for recommendation as SIAs as part of the Northern Great Plains Plans Revision process as follows:

Potential Special Interest Areas

SIA Name	Type	Approximate Acres [1]	Revised Plan Acres[1]
Bessey Tree Plantations[2]	Botanical Historical Scenic	19,540	19,540
Mallard Exclosure	Botanical	680	680
Samuel R. McKelvie Tree Plantations	Botanical Historical Scenic	2,170	2,170
Edgemont Shark Locality	Paleontological	940	940
Wallace Ranch Localities	Paleontological	420	420
Indian Creek	Geological Paleontological Scenic	840	840
Marietta South	Paleontological	260	260
One-Mile Hill	Paleontological	640	630
Red Shirt	Scenic	33,470	0
Swift Fox	Zoological	10,070	0
Kadoka Lake	Botanical, Zoological	1,210	0
Indian Creek	Geological Paleontological Scenic	27,600	0
Scenic Type Section	Geologic, Paleontological	350	0
Weta Dam	Botanical, Zoological	570	0
Hudson-Meng	Archeological	40	40
Quaking Aspen Stand	Botanical	8	8
Toadstool Park	Geological Paleontological Recreational Scenic	2,000	2,000
Warbonnet/Yellowhand	Historical	30	30
Bur Oak Enclosure	Botanical	3	3
Mountain Mahogany Stand	Botanical	90	90
	Totals	**100,931**	**27,651**

[1] Acreages are computer-generated and numbers over 10 are rounded to the nearest 10 acres.

[2] Many plantations on the Bessey Ranger District are getting old and dying out. Jack Pine is not sustaining itselt. Cedar stands are sustaining themselves to the point few other plant and animal species use these stands.